

Garden Report Fall 2005

2005 Middlebury College Organic Garden - Garden Advisor's Report

Internships

As a result of the generous support of two alumni-sponsored internships, four students were able to participate in the College Organic Garden this summer. Two full time workers (Claire Polfus '08 and Stephanie Smith '08) and two part time workers (Emily Peterson '08 and Sarah Calvert '08) helped the garden mature in its produce sales to Midd Dining. At the beginning of the summer they collaborated with garden founder Bennett Konesni ('05) to design a new garden layout that combined beauty, functionality and soil conservation features. Using this new plan they also were able to seed, cultivate, harvest and deliver crops to Midd Dining worth more than twice the dollar value of the previous year's sales. When Dining Services was closed for the last three weeks of August the gardeners sold produce to several Middlebury Restaurants (Otter Creek Bakery, Tully and Marie's, The Middlebury Natural Food Coop and American Flatbread). Produce was also donated to the Addison County Community Action Food Shelf. The garden interns also visited several farms during the summer (Golden Russet Farm, Orb Weaver Farm, the Burlington Intervale project, Green Mountain College Organic Farm, Gleason's Organic Grains, Lincoln Peak Grape Nursery and Kirk Webster's apiary) where they were able to talk with the owners about the unique aspects of each farm.

Harvest Festival was held on October 1, 2005. Over 130 students, parents (it was Fall Family weekend), faculty members, staff and community members attended. John Derick, a community volunteer who contributed countless hours of advice, labor and equipment was the featured speaker at the garden. A meal prepared from the garden produce was served to over 150 participants on campus.

Seed Saving Project

This was the second year of the seed saving project with the New England based Restoring Our Seed farmer-gardener partnership. Using our own seed stock from the first year of the project about 25 students started tomato seeds in their rooms in April from seed stock we saved last fall. Student summer interns also planted several heirloom tomato varieties, pole Romano beans, sugar snap peas and a Beit Alpha cucumber variety all from seed stock we collected last year. Plant growth and fruit quality was evaluated and those judged worthy were saved for the following year.

Children's Garden

Garden interns Claire Polfus '08 and Stephanie Smith '08 made two visits to the Cornwall Elementary School to help the kindergarten class start seeds. The two interns also visited the St. Mary's elementary School to lead a seed starting demonstration. In mid May and early June the Cornwall class came out the garden to transplant their vegetable starts and plant other seeds

directly in the soil. During the summer, Claire and Stephanie lead a weekly three hour children's gardening program for children from kindergarten through 6th grade at the College garden. Based on the curriculum developed last year by the founders of the Children's Garden program, Claire and Stephanie

Vermiculture

In the fall of 2004 small earthworm boxes were distributed to students who fed and cared for the worms over the winter. The worms were returned to the large worm box at the garden and produced casting that we used to create potting soil and as part of a fertilization program for the garden planting beds.

Research

In the spring the garden students planted insectaries (areas with flowering plants that would attract pollinators and beneficial insects) at the end of each planting area. During mid summer Professor of Biology Helen Young brought two student researchers to the garden to catalog insects visiting the different planting at the garden. The goal was to identify the variety of beneficial and pollinating insects that came to the insectaries. Their findings will be reported to the garden students at the end of the fall semester.

Classes

During the summer students from the French School participated in gardening activities two afternoons a week from 3:30 to 5:00.

During the 2005 spring and fall semesters classes in Environmental Sciences (3), Geology, Biology, Dance and the Teacher Education program were held in the garden.

Visitors

During Reunion week 26 alumni came to visit the garden and were given tours by the interns. Staff members from Human Services, Dining Services and Facilities Services came to the garden during the summer and fall on a series of tours. A group of high school students from the Food Project in Boston stayed overnight at the garden and helped our interns with planting in late July. A group of high school students from the Vermont Commons School in South Burlington, Vermont also toured the garden in October as part of a project to trace the route taken by Bill McKibben in his book *Wandering Home*.

Jay Leshinsky
Garden Advisor
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